

**National Transportation Safety Board
Washington, DC 20594**

Brief of Accident

Adopted 04/01/2003

DEN02FA030 File No. 12741	03/10/2002	Glenwood Sprngs, CO	Aircraft Reg No. N1323D	Time (Local): 20:19 MST		
Make/Model:	Mooney / M20C			Fatal	Serious	Minor/None
Engine Make/Model:	Lycoming / O-360-A1B		Crew	1	0	0
Aircraft Damage:	Destroyed		Pass	0	0	0
Number of Engines:	1					
Operating Certificate(s):	None					
Type of Flight Operation:	Personal					
Reg. Flight Conducted Under:	Part 91: General Aviation					
Last Depart. Point: Kremmling, CO			Condition of Light: Night/Dark			
Destination: Grand Junction, CO			Weather Info Src: Weather Observation Facility			
Airport Proximity: Off Airport/Airstrip			Basic Weather: Visual Conditions			
			Lowest Ceiling: None			
			Visibility: 10.00 SM			
			Wind Dir/Speed: 300 / 006 Kts			
			Temperature (°C): 4			
			Precip/Obscuration: None			
Pilot-in-Command	Age: 50		Flight Time (Hours)			
Certificate(s)/Rating(s)			Total All Aircraft: 225			
Private; Single-engine Land			Last 90 Days: 33			
Instrument Ratings			Total Make/Model: 30			
None			Total Instrument Time: 4			

After visiting his girlfriend, the non-instrument rated private pilot took off in dark night visual meteorological conditions to return home. When he failed to arrive, a search was initiated and the wreckage was found 2 days later in deep snow in mountainous terrain. According to recorded radar data at two different sites, a target departed the airport and climbed to 13,900 feet msl and took up a direct heading toward what would have been the pilot's planned destination. Halfway there, the target made a wide circle to the left of approximately 450 degrees, followed immediately by a tight circle to the right of approximately 360 degrees. The difference in time and altitude between the last two radar "hits" 14 seconds and 3,000 feet, respectively, equates to a 12,857 foot per minute rate of descent.

Brief of Accident (Continued)

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Glenwood Sprngs, CO

Aircraft Reg No. N1323D

Time (Local): 20:19 MST

Occurrence #1: LOSS OF CONTROL - IN FLIGHT

Phase of Operation: MANEUVERING

Findings

1. (C) AIRCRAFT CONTROL - NOT MAINTAINED - PILOT IN COMMAND
 2. (C) SPATIAL DISORIENTATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
 3. (F) LACK OF CERTIFICATION - PILOT IN COMMAND
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Occurrence #2: IN FLIGHT COLLISION WITH TERRAIN/WATER

Phase of Operation: DESCENT - UNCONTROLLED

Findings

4. TERRAIN CONDITION - MOUNTAINOUS/HILLY
5. (F) LIGHT CONDITION - DARK NIGHT

Findings Legend: (C) = Cause, (F) = Factor

The National Transportation Safety Board determines the probable cause(s) of this accident as follows.

the pilot's failure to maintain aircraft control due to spatial disorientation, resulting in a collision with terrain. Contributing factors were the pilot's lack of an instrument rating and the dark night conditions.